



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE

SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

**A report on the quality of local authority education  
services for children and young people**

**in**

**Ceredigion County Council  
Canolfan Rheidol  
Rhodfa Padarn  
Llanbadarn Fawr  
Aberystwyth  
Ceredigion  
SY23 3UE**

**November 2013**

**By**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on their capacity to improve.

In these evaluations, we use a four-point scale:

**Excellent**

**Good**

**Adequate**

**Unsatisfactory**

The report was produced in accordance with section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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## Context

Ceredigion is located in west Wales. The total population is 76,046. In Ceredigion, 55.5% of people over the age of three say they can speak Welsh compared with the Wales average of 25.8%. The employment rate in Ceredigion was 60.3% compared with the Wales average of 67.3% (year ending 31 December 2012). There were 6.9% of children living in workless households. Of the working population in Ceredigion, 7.9% have no qualifications, which is lower than the Wales average of 10.6%. The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age eligible for free school meals is 12.1%, lower than 19.5% nationally. This level of eligibility is the second lowest in Wales (PLASC 2013). None of the 47 areas in Ceredigion are in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD 2011). As of 31 March 2013, Ceredigion had 75 children being looked after by the authority. There were 50 children on the Child Protection Register in 2012-2013. Ethnic minority citizens account for 2.4% of the population, lower than the Wales average of 4.2% (year ending 31 December 2012).

### Financial context

The council has set its overall net revenue budget (excluding specific grants) for all services in 2013-2014 at £132.8 million, matching the level of the Welsh Government's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). Within the total budget, the council has set its net education budget at a level marginally above the notional education component of SSA. This provides a budget of £54.6 million, representing £5,815 per pupil compared with the all-Wales average of £4,992. The comparatively high level of funding within the notional educational element of SSA reflects mainly the sparsely distributed population within Ceredigion.

The total gross cost of primary school provision (including grants, and whether delegated to schools or not) is £5,146 per pupil, well above the all Wales average of £4,550 and the second highest in Wales. The equivalent figure for secondary schools is the highest in Wales at £5,823 per pupil compared with the Wales average of £5,120. Home-to-school transport costs form a high proportion of the education budget because of the rural nature of the county. As a result, delegation rates as calculated by the Welsh Government are comparatively low at 79.2%.

As with all Welsh local authorities, Welsh Government funding will reduce significantly in the short to medium term. In Ceredigion, the revenue funding will fall by 4.6% or £5 million in cash terms in 2014-2015.

## Summary

### **Overall judgement: Excellent**

#### **Current performance is judged as excellent. The excellent features include:**

- in 2013, the good standards in Ceredigion schools which place the authority in the top five authorities for Wales in all key stages for all the main indicators;
- attendance rates in primary and secondary schools, which are the best in Wales;
- The fact that every pupil that left school in the last three years had at least one recognised qualification;
- very robust and efficient processes to support, challenge and intervene in its schools;
- excellent use of data throughout the authority, and the contribution it makes to the authority's effective monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools;
- effective involvement of all primary teachers in annual moderation activities and authority-wide moderation of pupils' work;
- the highly successful way the authority meets pupils' additional learning needs;
- the very effective way the authority promotes social inclusion and wellbeing; and
- the joined up approach between services in providing support and challenge to schools to improve behaviour and attendance.

### **Capacity to improve: Excellent**

#### **Prospects for improvement are judged as excellent because:**

- strategic leadership of the council is strong, both politically and corporately;
- senior officers have a very good understanding of corporate priorities and as a result there is very effective collaboration between services;
- the council's strategic plans for education closely reflect the priorities of the Single Integrated Plan, Corporate Strategy and Improvement Plan, with strong and consistent lines of accountability to effective operational plans at all levels;
- self-evaluation is strongly embedded in the culture of the Learning Service and, increasingly, in the council as a whole;
- the clear and robust accountability framework in the Learning Service is sector leading practice; and
- the impact of strategic partnership work on improving outcomes and provision for learners is outstanding.

## **Recommendations**

R1 Ensure that the areas for improvement identified in the authority's self evaluation report are addressed effectively along with those noted in this report

### **What happens next?**

Estyn will invite the local authority to prepare written case studies describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

In 2013, performance in Ceredigion schools improved in the Foundation Phase and remained well above the average for Wales in key stages 2 and 3. It places Ceredigion in the top five authorities for Wales in all three key stages. Performance in key stage 4 improved at a faster rate than the Wales average in 2013 and the main indicators are all in the top four for Wales. Performance on those indicators involving English or Welsh first language and mathematics is among the best in Wales. Performance at the higher levels and grades is generally good in all key stages.

When the performance of Ceredigion schools is compared to that of similar schools, on the free school meal benchmarks, performance is above average in primary schools. It is good in key stage 3, where over 70% of schools are above the average. In 2013, performance in key stage 4 improved on previous years. It is now above average for the core subject indicator, the level 2 threshold and the capped points score. On the latter two indicators, more than 70% of schools are above the average. However, too many schools are below average on the thresholds for level 1 and level 2 including mathematics and either Welsh or English as a first language. The authority has a totally inclusive policy, with no special schools, so all pupils are in mainstream schools. As a result, every pupil counts towards performance statistics.

In 2012, performance in Ceredigion schools met the key stage 3 Welsh Government expected benchmark for performance based on free-school-meal entitlement and nearly met one of the key stage 4 benchmarks. However, in 2013 the authority met all the key stages 3 and 4 Welsh Government expected benchmarks.

In 2013, as in the previous two years, no pupils from Ceredigion schools left full-time education without a recognised qualification. This was the best in Wales.

The gap in performance between boys and girls has improved in all key stages in recent years and in 2013 is smaller than that across Wales on nearly every indicator. Only on the level 1 threshold in key stage 4 is the difference slightly larger than the Wales average. In 2012 the gap in performance between pupils entitled to free school meals and other pupils was smaller than average in key stages 2 and 3 and for three of the five main indicators at key stage 4. Data for 2013 is not yet available.

Particular groups of pupils, including vulnerable groups and those with additional learning needs generally attain at their expected levels. Many pupils make good progress after intervention programmes. Most pupils who receive support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills maintain the progress they make and attain the expected level at the end of the key stage. Only a very few pupils leave primary school below functional literacy levels.

Performance in Welsh first and second language is generally good in all key stages and at all levels except at level 4 in key stage 2.

Young people attain well on a wide range of non-formal qualifications.

### **Wellbeing: Excellent**

Attendance rates in primary and secondary schools are the best in Wales. When compared to similar schools based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, nearly half of primary schools are in the top 25%. The high attendance rates, especially in secondary schools, are excellent. Looked after children attend very well.

The rate of fixed term exclusions of five days or fewer is low at 31.8 per 1000 pupils, a slight increase on the previous year and is the fifth best in Wales. In the last two years the authority has had no permanent exclusions or fixed term exclusions that lasted six days or more. This enables learners to remain engaged with school and to overcome their behaviour issues more effectively. Overall the exclusion rates are the lowest in Wales.

A very high proportion of pupils remain in education or training post-16. The percentage of Year 11 pupils not in education, training or employment (NEET) has been consistently low over recent years and in 2012 was the second lowest in Wales.

Pupils develop positive attitudes towards a wide variety of health related issues. Learners' participation in sport and physical activities is very good and continues to increase year on year. For instance, 50% of primary pupils and 53% of secondary pupils attended a leisure or sports centre at least once a week in 2012-2013, compared with a Wales average of 28% of primary pupils and 31% of secondary pupils.

Overall, learners contribute their views effectively through the range of useful consultation mechanisms that the local authority uses. Youth Forum members learn helpful skills in communication and gain valuable experience, but their influence on the local authority's decisions about policy and provision for children and young people is limited.

Participation in youth service activities has improved considerably over the last year. The number of youth service participants gaining nationally recognised accreditations has also improved well. Young people's involvement in voluntary sector youth services, such as Young Farmers is very good.

Incidents of bullying and racist behaviour are low. Where they have occurred the local authority has supported schools effectively to address the issues.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Support for School Improvement: Excellent**

The authority has developed a significant range of very robust and efficient processes to support, challenge and intervene in its schools. These have resulted in improved standards throughout the key stages and improved leadership and provision in schools.

The authority has a very comprehensive database, which contains a wide range of information on every pupil. Officers use this well to monitor performance effectively throughout the authority, quickly identify underperformance and provide early intervention successfully for different groups of learners. The excellent use made of this data throughout the authority, and the contribution it makes to the authority's effective monitoring, challenge and intervention are sector-leading. The authority has shared the system with other authorities within the regional consortium and beyond.

Ceredigion is the lead authority in developing the regional framework to categorise schools according to risk and to target intervention. Officers from a range of different teams use this framework very effectively to evaluate each school and collate their evaluations into one overall judgement. The categorisation gives appropriate weighting to standards and leadership and schools have a good understanding of their entitlement to support.

The annual core programme of officer visits is rigorous, and thorough and focuses sharply on those schools that need to improve the most. This includes detailed reviews of literacy and numeracy where officers, lead practitioners and school leaders evaluate standards of leadership and management in all schools based on detailed analysis of performance and first hand observation of teaching and learning. Strong collaboration between school leaders and authority officers has successfully built the capacity of schools to improve their provision. Officers from school improvement, additional learning needs, inclusion and other support services within the Learning Service work together very effectively. Processes to quality assure officers' reports are good.

Officers know schools very well and effectively challenge underperformance. They take appropriate measures to improve leadership when this is needed. Headteachers are aware of their responsibility to drive improvement and the authority supports them to improve their capacity to do this. Officers use performance management effectively and, if necessary, the authority takes difficult decisions in order to address shortcomings in leadership. The authority is the only one in Wales not to have had any schools in a category of concern during the current inspection cycle.

The authority has very strong and well-co-ordinated literacy and numeracy strategies. Officers use a wide range of data and first-hand monitoring activities to address national and local priorities well. There are efficient arrangements to disseminate best practice within and beyond the authority and for shared school closure days to enable all staff to collaborate effectively. This has improved school leaders' capacity to drive improvement in their own schools.

The authority has successfully improved the moderation of teacher assessment in the core subjects. Officers and school leaders use detailed data on the performance of individual pupils to challenge teachers' assessments effectively where appropriate. All primary teachers and secondary core subject staff are involved in annual moderation activities. The well-established process has improved the accuracy of national curriculum assessments and officers are better able to identify and address underperformance. This is sector-leading practice. The authority has shared this



approach with a neighbouring authority, and as a result teacher assessment has improved in that authority's schools.

The authority provides good support for leaders in schools including peer mentoring for new headteachers and training for middle leaders. Officers attend governing body meetings to present annual performance reports and make sure that governors understand priorities for improvement in the school well.

### **Support for Additional Learning Needs: Excellent**

The authority is highly successful in meeting pupils' additional learning needs. This is because of the outstanding cohesive working across additional learning needs services, inclusion, school improvement and other support services. This is sector leading.

A well thought out service strategy sets out the authority's vision, policy and practice so that schools, parents and carers understand what to expect. Access to, and exit from, any additional support area is through clear criteria, agreed with schools. As a result, and in line with the direction of Welsh Government policy, the authority has significantly reduced the number of statements of special educational needs.

The authority identifies pupils' needs swiftly and provides appropriate support by working very effectively with multi-agency partners when necessary. This is particularly effective when pupils experience periods of difficulty such as transition into and between schools.

The recording and tracking of the progress of pupils with additional learning needs are outstanding. A sophisticated data system enables services to both plan provision strategically and evaluate its impact very effectively. Officers make excellent use of this robust data to target the authority's resources and challenge schools effectively. As a result, pupils with additional learning needs in Ceredigion generally make very good progress, particularly with literacy and numeracy skills.

A particular strength of the service is the very effective training and intervention provided by a core team of staff who work on an outreach basis with schools. This team has developed schools' capacity and confidence to meet a broad range of additional learning needs. A direct result of this work is that pupils make good progress and consequently the number of pupils receiving additional support is significantly reduced.

The authority provides parents and carers with good quality advice and support. It provides monthly drop-in sessions for parents where advice is available from experienced staff. These sessions give useful opportunities for parents to learn more about their child's progress and ask for advice on how to help their child. Communication with families is nearly always very good. With the active support of SNAP Cymru (a National Charity whose aim is to advance the education of people in Wales and support their inclusion), the authority usually quickly resolves issues to the satisfaction of parents.

Very few pupils attend independent schools away from their home area. When this is the best option, a multi-agency panel considers pupils' learning and wellbeing needs and is sensitive to parental preferences when deciding on a placement.

### **Promoting Social Inclusion and wellbeing: Excellent**

The local authority promotes social inclusion and wellbeing very effectively. Behaviour and attendance are strategic priorities, and these are central to school improvement. The joined up approach between services in supporting and challenging schools to improve behaviour and attendance is sector leading.

The authority has developed a comprehensive range of extremely effective provision to support vulnerable pupils and those with behavioural difficulties. The pupil referral unit and Hafan and Encil centres enable pupils to remain successfully in education. Effective referral processes, extremely good use of data and very close working between the authority and schools mean that pupils receive the support they need at the right time. This enables them to learn to manage their behaviour and gain in confidence, so that they can return to mainstream education. The pupil referral unit at key stages 2 and 3 operates very effectively as a short-term provision.

The authority provides high quality support, advice and training for teachers and non-teaching staff in relation to managing behaviour effectively. As a result, schools develop knowledge and expertise, which enables them to manage pupils' behavioural difficulties well. Very few pupils attend out of county placements.

The authority provides very clear guidance to schools in relation to promoting attendance. As a result, schools understand their roles and responsibilities well. Local authority staff work very well together and use data very effectively to provide targeted support and challenge to schools. Where there are concerns, the authority monitors schools closely until improvement is made. As a result, attendance in primary and secondary schools is the highest in Wales.

The authority monitors bullying data effectively. It responds to incidents or concerns well.

There is a strong partnership approach to developing all strategies that impact upon the social inclusion and wellbeing of young people. Initiatives such as the Team Around the Family ensure that young people and their families receive well co-ordinated, targeted support.

The authority uses data very effectively to identify young people who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Targeted intervention by the Youth Service and youth support services is very effective in helping pupils to remain in education and achieve positive outcomes.

The authority's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. It has extremely robust systems for monitoring safeguarding procedures in schools and other settings.

## **Access and school places: Good**

The local authority has a clear strategy for the reorganisation of primary and secondary schools that is compatible with the rural nature of the county.

The authority carefully reviews its primary schools in line with its policy and tailors solutions for sustainable schools that take good account of specific local issues. This has led to a significant reduction in the number of schools from 75, at the time of the last inspection in July 2009, to 58 currently. In addition, the authority has developed a range of federations, using different models to suit each case.

The authority is committed to retaining secondary provision in the six main market towns for as long as this is viable and has begun to tackle the secondary schools where viability is most at risk. It has already successfully developed its first 'all-through' school for 3 to 19 year-olds in Lampeter and is using this innovative approach as a model for its plans for a 3 to 19 school in Llandysul and a 3 to 16 school in Tregaron.

The authority has used the reorganisation process effectively to help raise pupils' standards by improving the quality of provision and the quality of leadership and management.

The authority has an effective asset management plan based on a sound assessment of the condition and suitability of buildings. It is reducing its maintenance backlog, primarily through school closures and the removal of mobile classrooms that are in poor condition.

The authority manages school admissions very well and prioritises places for vulnerable pupils.

There is good provision for early years education and childcare through schools and non-maintained settings. The authority quality assures settings effectively and categorises them using the same approach that is used with schools and takes appropriate action to address settings that cause concern. In conjunction with partners, the authority provides a comprehensive range of excellent support and training that has improved standards and the quality of provision and leadership. This work has been shared with several other local authorities.

The authority evaluates the provision for play across the county well and takes up opportunities to improve provision when reorganising schools. The Family Information Service provides helpful advice to parents.

The authority is working closely with a range of partners to provide appropriate youth support services that generally address the priorities highlighted in needs assessments.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>
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<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Leadership: Excellent**

Following the local government elections in 2012, the council agreed a new management structure based on four strategic directors taking strategic responsibility for service groups. This transformational change leads to senior officers having a significantly better understanding of corporate priorities and ensures highly effective collaboration between services. Heads of service and middle managers directly responsible for operational delivery support strategic directors very effectively. The Cabinet member and Strategic Director with responsibility for performance and improvement work very well to drive the pace of change. The council is disseminating the expertise and good practice in the education service very successfully across its other services.

Senior elected members have a very good understanding of the education service's strengths and areas to develop. Leadership by elected members and senior officers is highly effective in influencing behaviour and attitudes within the service, in schools, within the council and with partners. This effective leadership has contributed significantly to improvements in pupil outcomes over the past four years in a wide range of indicators. The council's strategic plans for education closely reflect the priorities of the Single Integrated Plan, Corporate Strategy and Improvement Plan, with strong and consistent lines of accountability to effective business plans at all levels. This synergy between plans ensures that school improvement integrates very effectively with a range of other support services such as inclusion, additional learning needs, human resources and finance and enables school leaders and managers to make well informed decisions to improve outcomes. The leadership and management of this aspect of the authority's work are sector-leading.

Senior officers in the Learning Service have prioritised the development of an innovative and powerful database of comprehensive performance data at pupil level. The service uses this very effectively to evaluate the quality and impact of services, identify underperformance and plan for development.

The clear links between the council's strategic and service plans enable the council to communicate its vision clearly and effectively to major stakeholders such as pupils, teachers, staff and partners. The education service works very well to meet the national priorities of literacy and numeracy and has developed highly effective strategies to improve attendance and manage behaviour. Schools, partners, elected members and officers are aware of and committed to achieving appropriate aspirational targets to improve outcomes for children and young people. The council has a good recent record of taking difficult decisions that have a positive impact on learners' standards and well-being.

Senior officers have shared their good practice by contributing significantly to the effective strategic development of Powys' post inspection recovery plan. The Strategic Director is the lead director for the regional school improvement service and the authority has a positive influence on the region's strategic direction.

The new administration has reconfigured the council's arrangements for scrutiny of education services. The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has four relevant work streams, which improve the quality and accountability of its work. Through these workstreams it takes account of a suitable range of information to challenge the executive, officers and schools appropriately and to inform the continuous improvement of services.

### **Quality improvement: Excellent**

Self-evaluation is strongly embedded in the culture of the Learning Service. There is a strong focus on accountability and continuous review and a consistent emphasis on achieving progress against priorities. This focus on evaluation and review is a major strength of the Learning Service and has led to significant improvement.

This culture originated from successful practice within education services. With the increased focus on service improvement since the recent management restructure, the authority has extended the process to develop consistent business planning and evaluation across all services. The deputy leader has the portfolio for performance and improvement and works well with senior officers to drive improvement. All heads of services report quarterly to the Corporate Performance Management panel. Senior officers have to justify underperformance and identify areas of potential risk including overspend. As a result the chief executive, senior officers and key elected members are developing good knowledge of strengths and areas for improvement across the whole authority. Services learn from good practice and lines of accountability are clearly defined. Members compare and challenge services more effectively. The process is continually reviewed and amended and the quality of service reviews is steadily improving.

A major strength is the clear and robust accountability framework in the Learning Service. Detailed plans at several levels from the service business plan through team and group plans cover all aspects of the service's work. All plans have nominated responsible officers and all clearly feed into the service business plan. There are rigorous arrangements for self-evaluation based on this framework. Officers review their plans quarterly and evaluate progress and impact. These reviews systematically inform the evaluation of the business plan which feeds to the quarterly service evaluation so there is a clear track through from the evaluation of teams to the corporate review. New priorities from the service review are then quickly incorporated into team plans.

The consistency and rigour of this process brings focus to the work of teams and have significantly increased the capacity of middle managers to develop innovative work within a tight framework. Officers understand well their responsibility for continuous improvement and their accountability for progress in their areas. The transparent sharing of plans and evaluations brings cohesion to teams and drives the strong collaborative working which has resulted in excellent service provision and the improvement of standards and leadership in schools. This framework has been successfully shared with a neighbouring authority where it has also significantly improved planning and evaluation. The authority's accountability framework and the use made of it to drive improvement are sector leading practice.

Consultation with children and young people about the services they receive is good. A perception survey with schools is used effectively to inform business planning and officers address any issues promptly. Commissioned reports from independent consultants evaluate well the quality of services and the plans for school modernisation. Officers and schools use a wide range of data consistently and effectively to monitor progress, set challenging targets and plan for improvement. These consultations and reviews, together with the analysis of progress on business plans, inform the service's annual self-evaluation. Information is used successfully to support service and school improvement and challenge underperformance. The authority provided a self-evaluation that accurately reflects the findings of the inspection.

Performance management arrangements are an integral part of the successful accountability framework. It is consistent across all areas and effective in bringing about improvement. All staff have performance related targets clearly linked to strategic priorities.

Officers challenge underperforming schools well and the authority has used its full range of statutory powers to bring about improvement where necessary.

The authority has addressed recommendations from previous Estyn inspections of education and youth support services well.

### **Partnership working: Excellent**

The main focus in this quality indicator is the impact that strategic partnership work has on the outcomes and provision for learners. In Ceredigion the impact on the improvements that have been achieved is clearly outstanding.

The importance of partnership working to meet the needs of individuals and groups of learners is understood well within the authority. It is a strategy driven at the highest levels and embraced effectively by elected members, officers and providers of learning across the authority. Partnership work is not seen as something 'added on' to core education services, but more as an integral part of joint working to enable all learners to achieve the best they possibly can.

The Local Service Board has established the Executive Group for Children and Young People as one of its five executive sub-groups. This ensures that the priorities to help children and young people to achieve have a direct input to the LSB's Single Integrated Plan.

The authority's approach to partnership working is inclusive and solution focused, supported exceptionally well by the sophisticated data bank that is shared effectively between services and agencies through a local agreement. As a result, key performance indicators are consistently good. On a wider level, Ceredigion is sharing its effective practices with the other authorities within the regional school improvement consortium.

Ceredigion has led very successful joint working with its partner in the local school improvement hub, Powys. It used valuable lessons, learnt from earlier attempts to

establish joint working with another authority, to inform the planning for the work with Powys. These lessons showed clearly that having a unified approach to change, with aligned management and governance structures across two different authorities was a preferred option for this hub. The authority had a strong focus on the sharing of strategic expertise and knowledge, in order to enable officers to develop their own capacity at all levels of the learning services in Powys. This collaborative approach to sharing good practice with Powys, underpinned by the successful improvement of outcomes and provision in Ceredigion, is sector-leading.

### **Resource management: Good**

The council supports its education service well through its budget setting, in keeping with its stated aims and improvement objectives. The net education budget for 2013-2014 is marginally above the notional allocation within the authority's Revenue Support Grant.

Budgetary control within the education service is sound and the management of resources reflects both careful planning and the agility to seize opportunities as they arise. The centrally-controlled service makes much better use of both human and financial resources than was the case at the time of the last inspection.

Restructuring of management, the move to appropriately-designed office accommodation and the development of a sophisticated information system have contributed very well to the creation of a multi-disciplinary team that works effectively to achieve strategic objectives.

The council and its partners have worked well together to reduce the number of pupils placed outside the county. As well as further strengthening the council's highly inclusive approach to learning, this has also reduced costs for all partners. The authority has worked well with its schools to agree and implement a number of improvements in the use of resources within the education budget. Changes in the way that funding for pupils with ALN is delegated to schools, for example, and in behaviour support arrangements have resulted in significant savings. At the same time, the changes have resulted in better outcomes and in provision in schools that is more resilient and sustainable. The savings generated have enabled the targeting of resources to priorities such as literacy and numeracy. Schools have agreed that funding delegated to them to fund key priorities is initially withheld pending the receipt and delivery of appropriate action plans.

The financial position of a number of secondary schools has, in recent years, been a cause for some concern. However, good financial support and changes to the funding formula have now largely resolved these issues. In total, the level of reserves in primary and secondary schools increased slightly during 2012-2013 and is now marginally above the average in Wales. Prudent financial management has enabled the education service to make a significant contribution to the savings required to meet the corporate funding gap in 2014-2015 and beyond.

There are clear plans in place to fund the authority's share of the £34.5 million 21st Century Schools capital programme to build on the progress already made in improving the quality of schools in Ceredigion. The bulk of the savings arising from

school re-organisation undertaken to date has been appropriately earmarked to support the projects within the authority's plans.

The total cost of the education service remains high compared with that of other similarly rural authorities. However, outcomes for learners are good and the quality of provision and partnership working is, in many cases, excellent. The education service uses the resources available to it well and provides good value-for-money.



## Appendix 1

### The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Jane Taylor	Team Inspector
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Mark Champion	Team Inspector
Steve Martin	Team Inspector
Huw Lloyd Jones	Team Inspector
Linda Mary Thomas	Peer Inspector
Arwyn Thomas	Nominee

### Copies of the report

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## Glossary of terms

### National Curriculum

#### Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.
- By the end of the key stage 3, at the age of fourteen, learners are expected to reach level 5 and the more able to reach level 6 or level 7.

#### Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

#### External examinations at key stage 4 or post-16

**Core subject indicator** – as above.

**Level 1 qualification** – the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.

**The Level 1 threshold** – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D to G.

**Level 2 qualification** – the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A\* to C.

**The Level 2 threshold** – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A\* to C.

**The Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics** – learners must have gained level 2 qualifications in English or Welsh first language and in mathematics as part of their threshold.

**Level 3 qualification** – the equivalent of an A level at A\* to C.

**The Level 3 threshold** – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to two A levels at grade A\* to E.

The **average wider points score** includes all external qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age – for example at age 16 or 18. To calculate this, the total points gained by all learners in the cohort is divided by the number of learners.

The **capped average points score** only includes the best eight results for each pupil from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at age 16.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.